

A *Bund. 24.*
S E R M O N

Explaining and Vindicating the
Miracle of *Jesus Christ*,
IN
Raising from DEATH to LIFE
THE
Widow's Son of *Nain*.

PREACH'D in the
Parish-Church of *CAMERTON*,
ON

Sunday the 9th of September, 1733, being the
16th after *TRINITY*, when that Miracle was
the Subject of the Gospel for the Day.

By *HENRY BROOKES*, M. A.
Chaplain to his Grace *JOHN Duke of Montagu*, &c.
and Rector of *Camerton* and *Henton-Blewet* in
the County of *SOMERSET*.

*Hodie beatus Evangelista, quia Vidua Matris unicum jam funeris
vinculis illigatum, lamentabili impositum jam pheretro, prose-
quentibus turbis euntem jam carceris ad sepulchrum, per Chri-
stum vita redditum nunciavit, omnium concussit Corda, movet
mentes, stupefecit auditum.*

Chrysologi Sermo de filio Viduæ excitato a mortuis. CIII.

L O N D O N:
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SERMON

Explaining and Vindicating the

Miracle of Jesus Christ

Raising from Death to Life

THE

Widow's Son



Parish-Church of St. Mary

Given the year of our Lord 1774, the 1st day of Trinity, when the said Widow's Son was the Subject of the Gospel in the Day.

By HENRY BAKER, A. M.
Curate to the said Parish-Church of St. Mary, and Rector of the said Parish-Church of St. Mary, in the County of Somerset.

Printed by J. BAKER, at the 'Three Graces' Press, in the City of London.

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TO

THOMAS CAREW of Crowcombe, Esq;

And One of

His MAJESTY'S Justices of the Peace

For the COUNTIES of

Devon and Somerset.

S I R,



H E N upon a mature Deliberation it was determin'd in my Mind to send out the Sermon annex'd (after some others) to see and take its Chance in the World, there was no Room for a Moment's Debate there, to whom I should dedicate and address it, or under the Shadow of whose Wings I should put it for
A Shelter

DEDICATION.

Shelter and Protection: for I presently thought with myself, that the Gentleman, who hath the Right and the Honour of Patronage to the Church where it was preach'd, would do me the Honour of extending it to a Sermon that was preach'd in it: And I was happily right in my Conjecture, when, in a Missive I had the Favour to receive from you, I found that which was tantamount to a Permission for me to inscribe it to you; who, as you are well known, Sir, to be sound in the Faith and Principles of the Christian Religion, and as regular in the Observance of its holy Precepts and Institutions; so I am persuaded, that you will not only with Patience, but with Pleasure, read over a Discourse (whatever its Imperfections) the chief Design and Tendency of which, is to evidence and establish the Truth of it, by illustrating and defending one of those glorious Miracles, which were wrought by its Blessed Author, to demonstrate and confirm it.

IT must be own'd that the Subject is seasonably selected, when of late all of them have been slanderously represented and expos'd to the Publick as but so many juggling Impostures, or nothing above the magical Feats of Apollonius Tyanæus, which some of the ancient Heathens cry'd up and magnify'd as equal to the true Miracles of the holy Jesus.

AND,

D E D I C A T I O N.

A N D, as I wish from my Heart, that the following Performance upon it were more answerable to the Dignity of the Matter contain'd in it, so I should be afraid of the Penetration of your Understanding, were I not well assured of the Candour of your Temper, in passing your Judgment upon it; but if the rest of the World should pronounce it without Mercy, I shall be but little concern'd at it, whilst my Conscience beareth me witness that I have no other Aim in it, than to vindicate the Honour, and set forth the Glory of the merciful and adorable Son of God, in one of those wondrous Works which he wrought to prove himself to be so.

*A N D should my Strength appear to be but small, yet, if I exert it to the utmost in his Cause, and be * valiant for his Truth, I shall in no wise lose my Reward, or that Crown of Righteousness which is laid up for them that fight the good Fight, and strive for the Mastery (if they do not obtain it) over the Enemies to the Cross of Christ, and to our common Salvation by him; or, to speak in the excellent Words of a once pious and learned † Knight of this Nation, on another Case, but very applicable to this, “ It shall content me,*

* Jer. ix. 3.

† Sir Henry Spelman, in the Epilogue to his Book, *de non temerandis Ecclesiis.*

DEDICATION.

*" and I thank God for it, that he hath girded
" me with so much Strength, as to strike one
" Stroke (tho' a weak one) in his Battle;
" and to cast one Stone (tho' but a small one)
" against the Adversaries of his Son and of
" his Church.*

I am sure, Sir, you are more reasonable than to expect from the Pen of a Man that hath so long dwelt, or rather rusted, in the dull Obscurity of a Country Cure, the Elegancies, Learning, and Oratory, which are continually heard resounding from the Cathedral Pulpits, and which are known to transcend those of the rural Incumbents, as far as the Roofs of their Churches are exalted above ours.

I have already avow'd the Principle that mov'd me to the publishing of this Sermon; but I shall now particularly tell you, Sir, that no Views or Prospects of Preferment had any the least Hand in it, tho' once I had the fairest and the justest Reason to expect it: But those bright and Halcyon Days are past and gone, and will never more return, and the Days of Gloominess and Darkness are now come upon me, and the Years wherein, I may truly say, I have no Pleasure in them.

NO, Sir, all Views and Prospects of this kind have long since been dead and buried within me, and without Hopes of a Resurrection;
my

DEDICATION.

my Heart and my Hopes are now, and for that reason, more fully fix'd and center'd upon a better, when the Day shall commence, wherein the now traduc'd and vilify'd Jesus, (and by those of his own Household) who rais'd some from the Dead when he was upon Earth, shall appear with Power and great Glory, and raise all the Dead out of it, take Vengeance upon his Enemies, and them up into Heaven, who have behav'd bravely under his Banners, and signaliz'd themselves in his Service.

IT hath long been the Mode, and it is grown now to be almost of the Essence of Dedications, to celebrate the Glories, and soar aloft in the Praises of them to whom they are made: and should I so far comply with it in this of mine to you, Sir, as to recount the Brightness of your intellectual, and the Integrity of your moral Virtues; the Constancy and Fervency of your Devotions, and your hearty and laudable Zeal for the Preservation and Prosperity of the Establish'd Church; or, should I make a Narrative of your accurate and impartial Distributions of Justice; your excellent Charges from the Chair at a County Sessions, both to the Instruction and Satisfaction of the Audience; all this is but to tell the World what they know already.

BUT

DEDICATION.

*BUT I shall venture to tell them what they may not so well know as I do, and which may be for their Good, if they will but follow your Example, in your ready and generous Largesses and Liberalities to the Needy and Distressed, and in your spiritual Charities (as Theophylact * calls them) bestow'd upon them in the Books of Common-Prayer, and other Books of Devotion, and particularly those that are preparatory to the receiving of the Holy Sacrament.*

BUT that which adds not a little to the Lustre of your Character (if any thing can be added to it) and which I have reserv'd for the beautiful Crown of all the other Parts of it, is your zealous and indefatigable Application to the Repairing, Beautifying, and Adorning the House of God, and the Place where his Honour dwelleth, both where you have your, and I have my Habitation, and this mostly at your own voluntary Costs and Expences, which is one of the best Ways of shewing Reverence to the Sanctuary of God, and honouring the Lord with our Substance; for which (according to the pious Nehemiah's Prayer) † he will remember

* Theoph. on the 25th of St. Matthew, towards the End.

† Nehem. xiii. 14.

DEDICATION.

us, and never wipe out the good Deeds we have done for his House, and the Offices thereof.

AS it is the horrid Sin of Sacrilege to violate, demolish, or deface the Houses of God, dedicated and set apart for his holy Worship, by solemn Consecrations and Benedictions, and which hath been visibly visited with the heaviest Judgments from Heaven; so, on the contrary, the Rebuilding, Repairing, and Embellishing them, is such a sublime, I had almost said heroic, Act of Piety towards him, as shall not fail of an ample Reward from thence, both in this World, and that which is to come. For whatsoever of Good or Honour is done to his House, he looks upon it (as indeed it is) done to himself.

I humbly ask your Pardon, Sir, both for the Prolixity and the Delay of this Dedication; for the latter, I have accounted with you elsewhere; and for the former, I hope you will please to accept of this Promise as an Atone-ment, that I will never trouble you with the like again.

ALL that I have to add is, that I think I cannot conclude this Epistle better, than with the Wish of S. John, in the Beginning of his third, to his well-beloved Gaius; which is,
that

DEDICATION.

that you may prosper, and be in Health,
even as your Soul prospereth ; *which ardently
and sincerely proceeds from the Heart of,*

S I R,

Your very much oblig'd,

and most humble Servant,

HENRY BROOKES.



St. LUKE vii. 13, 14, 15 Verses.

And when the Lord saw her, he had Compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

And he came and touched the Bier; (and they that bare him stood still) and he said, Young Man, I say unto thee, Arise.

And he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak; and he delivered him to his Mother.



AS the Gospels of our Blessed Lord and Saviour (after his publick and solemn Entrance upon his Ministry,) record to us in every Page, some of the excellent Things that were said, or the miraculous Things that were done by him, to increase our Faith in him, and stir up our Obedience to him; so, according to the holy Evangelist's Relations of the

B

latter,

2 *The Miracle of Jesus on*

latter, [his Miracles] they were done no less in a wonderful Order, than by a wonderful Power.

FOR when he had ended his divine Sermon upon the Mount, and was descended from it, he first cures a Leper with a Touch of his Hand, * (whose Disease was naturally incurable †.) But lest his malicious Enemies should impute this Act of Healing to any occult Art, or magical Preparations, he next restores to Health the Centurion's Servant, (who was so sick that he was ready to die) with || a Word of his Mouth, and at a Distance from his House.

BUT lest they might object to this too, that if the Centurion had not sent to Jesus, his Servant might have done well again, and was really recovered (being, probably, but young §) by some vigorous Effort of Nature, or the Operations of some Medicines that had been given him; soon after this, he proceeds to do a Work that all the World must acknowledge to be above the Power both of Nature and Physick, to raise a young Man from the Dead, and who had lain so long in that Condition, that they were now carrying him out to his Burial.

* Matth. viii. 3. † Lepram morbum natura incurabilem.
 Salmeron de signo resuscitati filii viduæ, pag. 152. || Matth.
 viii. 13. Luke vii. 10. § ὁ παῖς αὐτοῦ, Matth. viii. 6.

the Widow's Son of Nain. 3

FOR so the Context informs us, that as Jesus was just at the Gate of the City *Nain*, attended by his Disciples and a Multitude of People, there was a dead Man carried out [*i. e.* to be buried,] the only Son of his Mother, and she was a Widow, and much People of the City was with her, (to lament and condole her Loss, and out of a decent and neighbourly Respect to attend and honour the Funeral.)

And when the Lord saw her, he had Compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the Bier, (and they that bare him stood still) and he said, Young Man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak; and he delivered him to his Mother.

THO' the Gospel for the Day gave me the first Direction and Inclination to the Choice of the Text, as the Subject upon which I am now to deliver you a Sermon, yet I must own, the chiefest Motive to it was, from the Opportunity it gives me to assert and vindicate the divine Power of the holy Jesus, in working the stupendous and astonishing Miracle related in it, when this, as all the rest of his Miracles, has been, in the late Writings of one * that called himself a Christian, loaded

* Mr. Woolston.

with the most virulent and impious Blasphemies, Slanders and Invectives; and these too are uttered with such ludicrous, insolent and scurrilous Reflections upon the Blessed Lord that wrought them, as are hardly to be found in the Writings of *Celsus* or *Porphyry*, or in the Railings of *Julian* or the *Jews*, and which are neither fit for me to repeat, or you to hear, in this holy place: I return therefore to the Text; (but shall not, because I think I need not, make any Apology for so seasonable a Digression from it.)

AND in discoursing upon it, I shall oblige myself to the Consideration of these following Particulars.

I. Of the Greatness and Expediency of this Miracle, which is recorded in it.

II. Of the Truth and Certainty of it.

III. Of the Mercy and Compassion of our Lord in working it. And,

IV. Of the useful and profitable Inferences or Observations, that may be raised and extracted from it.

I. OF the Greatness and Expediency of this Miracle; for that it was a Miracle, is as certain as that it was not, it could not be the
Effect

Effect of any created Being, which can no more restore Life to another, than at first give it to itself: and therefore one Part of the King of *Israel's* Exclamation upon reading the King of *Syria's* Letter to him, to recover *Naaman* of his Leprosy, was full as just as it was passionate, * *Am I God, to kill and to make alive?* For however it might be in his Power to do the former, it was certainly beyond it to do the latter, that being reserved and lodged in His Hands only, who has declared himself to be *the Resurrection and the Life, i. e.* the sole Almighty Author and Giver of it.

THIS Power indeed hath sometimes been delegated and communicated by him to the Sons of Men, as to the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and some other his Bishops and Pastors in the first and purest Ages of the Church; and for the Truth of this, we have the Testimony of *Irenæus* † (which is also cited by the celebrated Church-Historian *Eusebius* §) who says, that in his Time *the Dead were raised to Life*, so as they continued many Years afterward upon Earth; and he gives a particular Instance of a Man thus raised by the Prayers and Fastings of the Church, and challenges the Hereticks, as we do the Heathen, to shew that any such thing

* 2 Kings v. 7.

† Lib. 2. c. 57.

§ Lib. 5. c. 7.

was ever done amongst the Men of their Persuasion in Religion.

AND it was necessary then that such a mighty Power as this should be given from above to some of the holy Fathers and Governours of the Christian Church, to strengthen the Faith, to animate the Hope, and support the Courage of its persecuted and martyr'd Members (of which *Irenæus* himself was one *) by seeing in the present Resurrection of others, their own in the great Day of God, to Glory and Immortality in Reward of their Sufferings for his Truth, and their Fortitude and Patience under them, by which its Pale was widened, and its Borders enlarged, (for the Blood of the Martyrs was always the Seed and Increase of the Church) as it acquired and diffused a Belief of the Truth in the Christian Revelation, which *to the Jews was a Stumbling-block*, and *to the Greeks Foolishness* †; and particularly a Belief of that peculiar and distinguishing Article of it, (so much ridiculed and judged so impossible by the Heathen World) a Resurrection of the Body from the Bed of Corruption, and a Reunion of the Soul to it, after a long, long Separation from it.

* Baron. or as Dr. *Cave*, anno 205, anno 112.
i. 23.

† 1 Cor.

THIS being the chief Corner-stone in the Fabrick of the Christian Religion, it was necessary that it should be firmly and, in a manner, visibly laid; when so great a Part of the World that were to be built upon it, utterly rejected this Stone, and would not believe there was any sure Foundation for it.

A RESURRECTION of the Dead never entred into the Faith of one whole Sect amongst the *Jews*, (in which yet there were Men of the best Account *) the Sect of the *Sadducees*; and the learned Men of *Athens*, both among the *Epicureans* and the *Stoicks*, when St. Paul preached and asserted it there, looked upon it as a most absurd Hypothesis, contrary to all Reason, and the Maxims of the best Philosophy, and therefore they mocked and derided him for it; as the heathen *Cæcilius* in the *Octavius* of *Minucius* † says of the Christians, that they frame and knit together a Parcel of old Wives Fables; say, they are to rise up again after they are dead, and reduced to Dust and Ashes; and I know not with what Confidence they believe one another's Lyes; you would think they were risen again already.

* *Josephus*, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18. Chap. 2.

† *Minucius Felix*, pag. 22. Ed. Cantab. Aniles fabulas adstrunt & annectunt, renasci se ferunt post mortem, & cineres & favillas; nescio quâ fiduciâ mendaciis suis invicem credunt, putes eos jam revixisse.

NOR did the Disciples of the great *Plato*, who seem'd to be almost a Christian, and was indeed a sublime Philosopher, believe one Word of the Resurrection of the Body, which they thought was fram'd only for a Prison and a Punishment of the Soul, to which it was doom'd and confin'd for some Sin or Sins committed in (what they believed) its pre-existent State. And therefore in their speaking of Death, which lets out and sets free the Soul from the Body, they usually called it the getting out of the * Dungeon, in which the Soul is fettered, and exerting itself into its native Liberty.

AND according to this Notion it was, that the most learned of the Academy, in their Writings, not only opposed, but exploded the Resurrection of the Body, which implies a Re-union of the Soul to it; for Instance, in those of one † of them we may read (translated into our own Language) *that as long as the Soul is in the Body, so long it is asleep*; but that the true Awakening is the Awakening from the Body, not a Resurrection with it: for the Resurrection with the Body is but a Change from one Sleep to another, as Men

* Χωρισμὸν ἐκ τοῦ Σπλάγνα. † Plotinus Ennead. 3. lib. 6. cap. 6. p. 310. ἡ δὲ ἀληθινή Ἐγρήγρησις ἀληθινή ἀπὸ σώματος, ἢ μὴ σώματος ἀνάστασις, &c.

the Widow's Son of Nain. 9

go from one Bed to another ; but the true Awakening is from all Body, which is contrary to the Nature of the Soul.

AND therefore our Blessed Lord, to remove the Prejudices and Unbelief of Mankind, which were so universally and powerfully set against this Doctrine, that contained the greatest, the eternal Happiness of them all ; that they might not take it up only upon Trust, and depend wholly upon his own Word, or the Futurity of the Resurrection-day, for the Truth and Certainty of it, gave them present and visible Specimens and Demonstrations of his Power to produce and effect it ; and whilst he sojourned upon Earth, he raised three Persons from the Dead, * the only Son of this Widow of *Nain*, † the Daughter of *Jairus* a Ruler of the Synagogue, § and *Lazarus* of *Bethany*, the Brother of *Martha* and *Mary*.

WHICH were Facts that were well known to the World, and confessed by his very Enemies ; Facts that filled the Multitudes that beheld them with Fear and Astonishment, and which equally illustrated the Truth of his Doctrine, and the Immensity of his Power ; to which, tho' all Things are alike easy, that are above the Operations of Nature, yet, ac-

* Luke vii.

† Luke viii.

§ John ii.

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according to human Apprehensions, it seems a greater Miracle to raise the Dead to Life, than the desperately Sick to Health.

AND they that found Success in the latter, without the Use of natural Means, or in the former, where none could be used, have humbly owned and professed that it was done by Vertue of the Divine Power called down from Heaven, by the Prayer of Faith and Supplications, as the Apostles St. *Peter* and St. *John* ascribed the Cure of the lame * Man that was laid at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, only to the Name of *Jesus of Nazareth*; to that Name that is above every Name in Dignity and in Power.

AND this Power of raising the Dead to Life, is so transcendent and incomprehensible, that (as the learned *Grotius* observes †) it must be imputed to no less than to the immediate Finger of the Almighty God.

BUT because such Miracles as these, when they are confessed, extort a Confession likewise of the Divinity of that Person by whom they are wrought, they that are averse to the Belief of a Resurrection, because of a certain Judgment that immediately follows it, (to the Truth of which Doctrine these Miracles are

* Acts iii. 16.

† Grot. de ver. Chr. Relig. Lib. 2. Sect. 6.
performed

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performed as an Attestation) and of which Judgment (it may be) their loose and profligate Lives make them miserably uneasy, if not in Terror to think, endeavour to avoid the Force, by denying the Fact of them, (as they that are like to be pinched with the Conclusion of an Argument, at a venture deny its Premises) I shall now,

II. INSIST upon the Truth and Certainty of this Miracle of raising the Widow's Son to Life, recorded in the Text to us, which was not a Thing that was done in a Corner, a Thing that had no Foundation in Time or Place, or that was transacted Nobody knows when or where; but it was attended with all the Circumstances that can reasonably be required to evidence the Truth of any Matter of Fact. For,

I. HERE is the Place (and that no obscure one neither) which was the Scene of this stupendous and wonderful Work, the City *Nain*, a City of *Galilee*, situate in the Lot or Inheritance of *Zabulon*, near to *Nazareth* and Mount *Tabor*, about twenty Miles from *Tiberias*, and forty-eight from *Jerusalem*, and which, St. *Jerom* has told told us, * was standing in his Time.

* In Lib. de locis Hebraicis.

AND (2.) in point of that, when this Miracle was wrought, the Historians which have given us an Account of the Travels and Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, inform us, that it was in the second Year of his publick Ministry, as he was going up from *Galilee* to *Jerusalem* to keep the Feast of *Pentecost*. And

(3.) THE Evangelical Scripture records a Cloud of Witnesses that there were to it; much People that there was with Jesus; and much People that attended the Corpse: In the Presence of all which, at his Word and Command it revived, *and he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak*, which was an irrefragable Argument, and an infallible Indication, that he was as truly and really alive, as ever he had been before; his sitting up and speaking being (as *Theophylact* observes *) a Sign of a real and true Resurrection; for, as he further adds, a dead Body can neither sit up, nor speak: And it would be the Language of Phrenzy and Distraction to question whether he had been really dead; they that washed the Body, and wrapped it in Linen with the Spices and Odours, (as the Manner of the *Jews* was to bury) (no Converts or Confederates of Jesus) could not but be fully assured

* *Theophylact*. in loc.

and satisfied of that ; nor is it to be imagined by any, that are acquainted with the Bowels and Affections of human Nature, (especially with those of Parents to their Children) that a Mother should ever consent to bury her only Son (it may be her only Child) alive : and if there were nothing else but her own bitter Tears and Lamentations, they are sufficient to wash away the contemptible Force of this Objection.

AND if there be any of our modern Unbelievers, Mockers and Slanders of the Miracles of Jesus (as in this present Age there are not a few, tho' in a Christian Country, and under a Christian Government) that should come upon me with this Question, and ask me where the Soul of this young Man was, during the Time of its Separation from the Body, I should answer him in the Words of the Book of *Wisdom*, * that *the Souls of the Righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no Torment touch them* : And that this young Man's was there, is not to be doubted, when the Miracle of recalling his Spirit, and reviving his Body, was such a distinguishing Honour, as was not likely to be vouchsafed by the Holy Jesus to any, but to a righteous and holy Person.

* *Wisd.* iii. 1.

LAZARUS, whom he raised, was known to be such, and had the glorious Dignity of being styled his Friend by his own Mouth. †

AND that *Jairus* was a good Man, his Name not only imports, * but his lively Faith in, and his humble Adorations of the Blessed Jesus, † clearly convince and testify to us: and therefore it may be taken for granted, that he had educated his Daughter in a virtuous and religious Manner, who was too young (but twelve Years of Age) to forsake or deviate from the Paths of Piety and Goodness, if well enter'd and instructed in them.

AND this young Man likewise, being supposed to be the Son of a good, as well as of a rich Woman, (for otherwise our Lord would not, for all her Riches, have been moved with so singular a Compassion towards her) may well be supposed to have been righteous too, as the others were, and so, not an unmeet Subject for the Operation of so generous and glorious a Miracle.

BUT should it be urged further, if this be true, and the Spirit of this young Man, in its State of Separation, was happy with God,

† John xi. 11.

* Illuminans, vel illuminatus. Salm. de suscit. filia Archisynag. pag. 103.

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was it not an unkind, and even a cruel Thing in Jesus, to call it back into the Body, and confine it to be conversant with a miserable and naughty World? To make use of *Abso- lom's* Expostulation with *Hushai*, † *Was this his Kindness to his Friend?*

To which I return, that the Happiness of the Spirits of just Men, after they are delivered from the Burden of the Flesh, results and arises (as here upon Earth) from their Conformity and Obedience to the Good-will and Pleasure of that great God, *that sitteth upon the Throne of Heaven, and ruleth over all the Kingdoms of the World*; upon every Act of which Conformity and Obedience, new Joys and Transports of Beatitude flow into and fill their righteous Souls: And if he should command them, for his Honour and Service, to return to their Bodies and live a while in them, With what Readiness, and with what Alacrity would they descend and obey him? whilst they know, *the more they do in the Work of the Lord, the greater shall be their Reward*; and whatever they contribute to his Glory, shall end at last in the Increase of their own.

† 2 Sam. xvi. 17.

AND to this Purpose a certain Commentator, * upon the 41st Verse of the 9th Chapter of the *Apostles Acts*, says, *It is no Trouble to a Man, if, when he is dead, he obey the Will of God and live again.*

AND there is no reason why the Spirits of just and good Men (who are as the holy Angels) should not put off and on their Bodies, at God's Command, as willingly and joyfully as those Angels do theirs, which they assume, and with which they have often visibly appeared to Men upon Earth.

NOR is there any reason to fear, that the Souls of the Righteous thus returning to their Bodies, should ever perish through the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, or the Devil, by living in them: for, in the Sense of another learned Writer † upon the Scriptures, *A separated Spirit, that has been Partaker of the Joys of Paradise, will esteem worse than Dung, or Salt that has lost its Savour, all the Pleasures and Profits of this Life, tho' their several Excellencies were distilled into one Quintessence of Perfection.*

* Non affert molestiam ut Deo vocanti, mortuus obtemperet reviviscendo. *Lorinus.*

† Tostatus on the 2 Kings, 4. C. *Quas.* 56.

BUT should it (as it may) be further enquired, if Death be the Punishment of Sin, is it not somewhat hard (especially for any good Man) to undergo it twice? No certainly, when a thousand Deaths are not answerable to the Demerits of any one Sin: And where is there any Man living so good, that he sinneth not? And if a righteous Man should die never so often, Death can be no Punishment to him, nor would it be accounted as such by him, whilst it gains him a Deliverance from his Sins and his Labours, and opens to him a Door of Admittance into a far happier State than the best that is to be found in this World: into a Glimpse of the beatifick Vision, and a Participation of the Joys of that gracious Lord, whom he hath so stedfastly believed, and so faithfully served; who likewise can (if he pleases) so attemper and soften the Pains of two Deaths, that they may amount to no more than those of one.

YET once (and but once) more; (for I would not leave one Stone unturned, one Thing unsaid, that may be for the Conversion or Satisfaction of any of our Christian Infidels.)

IF the Soul of this young Man was in Heaven whilst it was separate from the Body, (say they that are not willing to believe the

D

Immor-

Immortality of the Soul) it is very strange that he did not relate and declare what he saw and heard during the Time that he stay'd there; the Glory of the Place, and of the Persons that enjoy it; the Manner of their Conversation, and that in particular which he had with them.

To which be it answered, And who knows but he did? Tho' we have no Account of it in the Gospels, as we have not even of many of our Saviour's Words and Actions *: Neither have we any of what this young Man said, when he sat up, and began to speak, at his Life and Soul's first Re-entrance into his Body upon the Bier.

BuT more fully, and to the purpose: That it was the general Belief of the first Ages of the Church, that the Souls of the best Men (except those of the Martyrs, as some affirm) are not received into Heaven, properly so called, till the Day of universal Judgment and Retribution, but that they are kept till that Time in some certain Receptacles, which *Irenæus* calls the Invisible † Place, (because not known to us, but only to God and his holy Angels) where they are in some good State and Degree of Happiness, but not in

* John xxi. 25.
dedicated to Dr. Cave.

† In the Life of *Irenæus* by A. S.

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that full and perfect State which they shall enter into after the final and everlasting Sentence, being, according to the pious Belief and Language of Antiquity, * Candidates of Eternity, and Expectants of the Resurrection.

AND if it were not so, our Church would not teach and enjoin us to pray (as in the Burial-Office) that *God would shortly accomplish the Number of his Elect, and hasten his Kingdom, that we, with all those that are departed in the true Faith of his holy Name, may have our perfect Consummation and Bliss, both in Body and Soul, in his eternal and everlasting Kingdom.*

AND to this primitive and Catholick Belief, an honourable Person, † once of our own Nation, hath given his Assent in a very learned Annotations on *the Acts of the Apostles*, as therein he has told us, that *an Assertion to the contrary, hath no Foundation either in the Scriptures, the Fathers, or Reason.*

BUT (2.) and lastly, Had this young Man been in Heaven (the third or highest Heaven) to which St. *Paul* was caught up, § and saw such Things, as it was not lawful or possible for

* *Aeternitatis Candidati, & (barbarous Translation!) sustinentes resurrectionem.*

† Sir Norton Knatchbull's Annotations on *Acts* ii. 27.

§ 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

him to utter, what could he have told more, than our Blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from thence, and from the Bosom of the Father, and was then actually upon the Earth, and revealing (as far as it was necessary) the Glories and Felicities of Heaven to the World.

WERE it not that Scepticism and Infidelity appear bold and bare-faced, and are grown up to the greatest Height and Assurance amongst us, I should not have been so long, or went so far in the Prosecution of this Particular; but when the Infection is strong, it is necessary that we should double the Antidote; and when the ulcerous Humour spreads, convenient that we enlarge the sanative Application.

I proceed now at length to insist,

III. UPON the great Mercy and Compassion of our Blessed Lord in his working of this Miracle. It may be observed from the holy Scriptures, that all his Miracles except three, (of a punitive and vindictive Nature) were as so many Mercies to Mankind; and those three were, his driving the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, his destroying (by permitting the Devils to enter into) the Herd of Swine, and his laying a Curse upon the barren and fruitless Fig-tree; the Effect of which

which was, that it presently withered away; which was done (no doubt) to let the World know, that (as he was God) he had Power to execute Justice, as well as to shew Mercy, and that he was no less able to destroy, than he was to save.

BUT Mercy, Mercy was the prevailing Affection, and the peculiar Delight of his Soul, which was so moved and melted within him at the Sight of this Woman's Misery, and the mortal Occasion of it, that tho' she never made (as we can find) any Request or Address to him to exert his Divine Power on her Behalf in restoring Life to her Son, and to herself (almost as dead as he, with Grief and Sorrow for him) yet he had not the Heart to pass by and take no Notice of her, he could not but commiserate, condole, and relieve her.

FOR he graciously draws near, and speaks comfortably to her, saying, *Weep not*; yet not intending by this to prohibit a moderate and decent Sorrow for the Dead, and making a Lamentation for them as they are worthy*; but an excessive and inconsolable Sorrow, as if we had no Hopes of their Happiness, or Faith in God's Goodness, to make up the Loss of them to us.

IN which Sense he saith unto her, *Weep not*; do not give yourself up to this outrageous and extravagant Passion of Sorrow, nor break your Heart, as if you would go into the Grave with your Son; for he shall not go thither now, I will restore him to Life, and to you.

UPON which he bids him arise, *and he that was dead, sat up, and began to speak: and he delivered him to his Mother*, who had so bitterly bewailed and lamented him, to be both the Staff and Comfort of her Age, in Duty as a Son, and in Protection as a Husband to her.

As I have now given you the literal, I might also give you the mystical Sense of the Text, which is to be found both in the ancient Fathers and other Commentators upon it, by which I mean their allegorical, founded upon the literal Interpretations of the Miracle recorded in it; but these being too long and too many to be brought within the Compass of this Discourse, I shall proceed in the

IVth and last Place, To the useful and profitable Inferences or Observations that may be made and extracted from the several Particulars of the Text, according to its literal Sense and Acceptation. And,

I. FROM

1. FROM what has been delivered upon it, we may derive a strong Confirmation, and a full Assurance of our Faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who, when *John* the Baptist, upon the Rumour of this Miracle, sent two of his Disciples to him, to know whether he was the Christ, or the true Messiah, amongst several other Proofs which he remitted of his being so, he bade them go and tell their Master in particular, that *the Dead were raised* *; and he must be dead indeed, in the Sins of Arianism and Infidelity, who doth not for this Reason believe Jesus to be the Son, and (a Son being of the same Nature with the Father) God of God, Jesus to be *the Resurrection and the Life*.

2. FROM the Scripture which we have now considered with a Relation had to the Context, (to which it is inseparably annex'd, and which therefore hath been already read in your Ears) we are well reminded of the Frailty, Brevity and Uncertainty of human Life; and that the Young and the Vigorous, no less than the Aged and Decrepid, are liable to the Summons, and found amongst the Captives and Triumphs of Death.

* Luke vii. 22.

FOR, there we have an Account of a young Man (or rather of a Youth *) carried out to be buried, and whilst we see (as we daily do) the Infant and the Suckling snatch'd from their Mother's Breasts, and forced to exchange the Swadling for the Grave-cloths, the Youth drop, by some unwholesome Blast, from the Tree of Life, and by his untimely Fall, put an end to the many Hopes and Fears concerning him: and the Man in his full Strength (*his Breasts full of Milk, and his Bones moistened with Marrow †*) hurried off by a violent, or consumed by a pining Sickness; and when, finally, there are so many disconsolate Parents, that have clos'd all the Eyes of a numerous Offspring, and continually water their Dust with their own, there is no need of many Words to convince us, that the Divine Decree [*it is appointed unto Men once to die §*] is as extensive and universal, as it is certain and unalterable; and that Persons of all the several Ages, as well as Persons of all Ranks and Conditions of Life, are comprehended and included in it.

AND certainly, tho' the Scripture hath fixed the utmost ordinary Age of Man at three-

* Græcè habetur, Νεανίσκος. Adolescentule; erat enim intra 14 & 21 annum, & paucis annis prætergressus erat annum 14. *Salm. de sign. resuscitati filii vidua.*

† Job xxi. 24.

§ Heb. ix. 27.

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score Years and ten, yet God of his Wisdom and Goodness hath no where promised or assured us, that we shall all, or that any one of us in particular, shall live so long : and since we are none of us sure that we shall, and we see so very few that do, let us not foolishly put off (as the way of the World is) the Reformation and Amendment of our Lives, meerly upon a Prospect and Presumption that we may ; but whilst it is called to Day, turn from our Sins, and prepare to give an Account of ourselves to God, since we know not but that before To-morrow, Death may come and carry us to appear in Judgment before him.

3. From hence we are comfortably instructed, that when all human Means and Helps are in vain, God can, and sometimes doth, deliver us out of our Afflictions and Distresses, and this after a wonderful and unexpected, if not an unaccountable and almost miraculous Manner ; as here, there was no Help for this disconsolate Widow, but in her God ; and in her God she found it. And how many were there of the Demoniacks and the Lunaticks, of the Blind and the Lame, the Leprous, the Deaf and the Dumb, that despaired of ever being otherwise, who yet were healed by the Omnipotent Words and Hands of the Blessed Jesus ? And that Jesus hath the same Power and Compassion now which he had then, and

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can

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can and will (if he sees it best for us) upon our Prayers and Supplications, with strong Cryings and Tears, deliver us out of our Adversities and Miseries, when we see none that will pity or regard them, and no way in the World open for our Deliverance from them: from Oppression and Cruelty, from Poverty and Contempt, from Diseases, and even Death itself: according to the Words of *Eliphaz to Job*, * *He shall deliver us in six Troubles, yea, in seven there shall no Evil touch us. Deliver our Souls from Death, our Eyes from Tears, and our Feet from falling, in those of the holy Psalmist.* †

4. FROM the Text, and what has been said upon it, we are plainly taught, and well put in Remembrance, that, after the Example of our Lord and Saviour, we are bound to comfort and support those that are cast down under any great Trouble and Affliction; especially under the sorest and heaviest of all Troubles and Afflictions, the Loss by Death, of the nearest Friends and Relations: an Affliction! that pierces the deepest into the Heart and Spirit, because it is the Loss of the dearest Things we have in this World, and a Loss that is never to be retrieved or repaired by all the Powers and Interests of it: For who can

* Job v. 19.

† Psal. cxvi. 8.

restore or recover the Dead to Life? The Dead! who (in the wise Woman of *Tekoab's* Words to King *David*) *are as Water spilt upon the Ground, which cannot be gathered up again* *. All therefore that we can do in this Case, is, to administer Comfort, tho' we cannot a Remedy, (and, blessed be God, it will admit of that) and by proper lenitive and emollient Arguments, assuage the Tumours of their Grief, and make that Burden lie somewhat easier, which must be inevitably born.

5. FROM this mighty and marvellous Act of Pity and Compassion in our Blessed Lord to the mournful Widow of *Nain*, we may learn how great and God-like a Thing it is (and how well it will become us, as his Disciples,) to imitate him, and to follow his Steps in this likewise; to shew Mercy and to do Good to them that need it, sometimes when it is not asked, when it is not solicited of us; for so was not this by or for her, (as we can see) unless by her bitter Sighs and Tears.

AT the Sight of which the Lord of Life, moved purely by his own innate and infinite Goodness, restored it to her Son, and her Son unto her.

* 2 Sam. xiv. 14.

AND tho' we cannot give Life after the Manner that he did, yet if the same Mind be in us, as there was in him, we shall give something to uphold and preserve it when we see it sinking and perishing in any of his poor Members, by Sicknes or Hunger, or by Cold and Nakedness, without expecting to be pressed and importuned to the Relief of their Necessities and Distresses.

THERE are many poor Creatures in the World, who (fallen from a high to a low Estate by the Frowns and Misfortunes of it) are ashamed, tho' press'd hard by their Wants, to ask; but surely these do not the less, but rather the more, deserve the Succours of our Charity, than they that are noisy and clamorous for it.

IT hath always been the Property and the Pleasure of great and generous Minds, to prevent the Complaints of the Indigent, and even to surprize them with their Benefits; and if he that giveth quickly when he is ask'd, be said (in a proverbial * Expression) to give twice, *i. e.* to double the Benefit, to what a Value must that Benefit be raised and enhanced that comes without asking at all?

* Bis dat qui cito dat.

WHAT Love, what Gratitude, and what Reverence will it attract from the Receiver? What Blessings, what Praises, and what Prayers? But (which is above all this) what loud *Euge's* and ample Rewards will it raise for the Giver in the Day of final Recompence and Retribution, especially when he hath bestow'd his Goods to relieve those that are not able to make him any, and on them from whom he can hope for nothing again.

HAPPY is the Man, and happy shall he be, who is thus occupied in good Works, and in such glorious Charities to the World! there being a Promise made (the Foundation whereof standeth sure) that the Reward of his Hands shall be given him, and that *he shall be recompensed at the Resurrection of the Just* *.

6. AND lastly, This merciful Miracle of the Holy Jesus, and our Blessed Saviour, is an Anchor of good Hope, and strong Consolation to our Souls, whenever it shall please God to cast us down with his Arm, and confine us to a Bed of Sickness; because it is a firm Foundation for our Belief and Assurance that He that wrought this Miracle can, tho' we should be sick, and nigh unto Death, have

* Luke xiv. 14.

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Mercy upon us, and raise us up to our former Health; or, if we die, that he can and will, (if we die in his Peace and Favour) raise us from the Grave at the last Day with a Body that shall die no more, and to a Life which is everlasting.

IT being as easy to Him (with whom all Things are possible) to recollect and re-unite the scattered Atoms of our earthly Tabernacle, and form them anew into a human Body, as to restore Life to it, after it is fled from it, but before it be corrupted and dissolved; as easy (I say) to him, whose Spirit at the Sound of the last Trump (*the Trumpet of God **) shall breathe upon our Dust, and say unto us, Arise, and we shall stand up and live; and then shall the same Spirit also move once more upon the Face of the Waters (*the great Deep †*) and they, they shall give up their Dead § likewise.

AND by the Power of the same Spirit, Jesus the Son of God shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself ||.

* 1 Thess. iv. 16.
 † Phil. iii. 21.

† Gen. vii. 11.

§ Rev. xx. 13.

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*TO whom therefore with God, the Father
of an infinite Majesty, and the Holy
Spirit of Love and Consolation, be all
Honour and Glory, throughout this
World, and the World without End.
Amen.*

F I N I S.





